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MICROFILMED

Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

Secret

April 10, 1975

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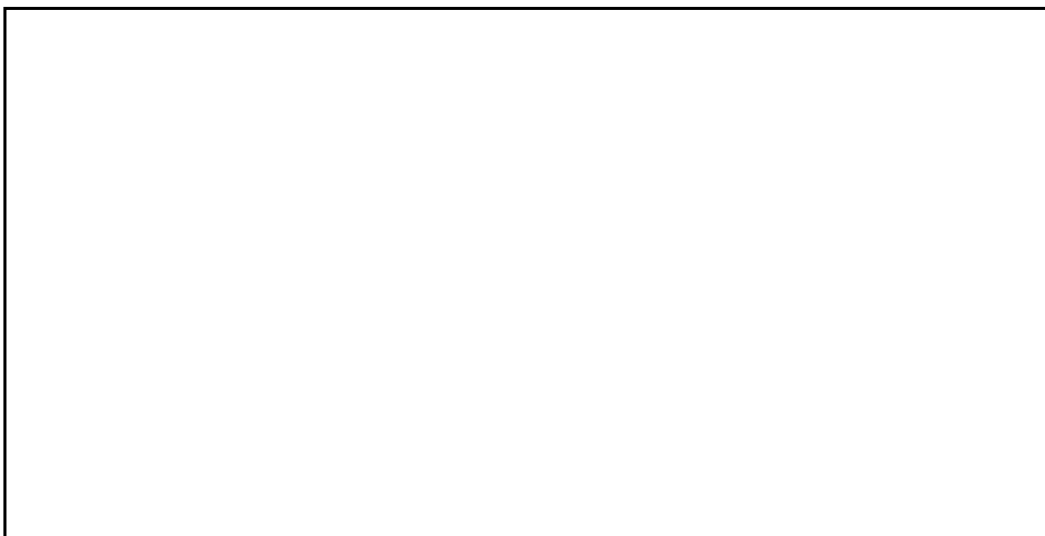
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**SURVEY OF COMMUNIST
MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA***

**(This report covers the period
March 27 - April 9, 1975)**

The Key Points

- The South Vietnamese lost Da Nang, Qui Nhon, and Nha Trang and almost half of their combat forces in the hectic evacuation of the northern coast.



- [redacted] COSVN has now changed its policy and that 1975 will be the year of decision. Recent North Vietnamese unit deployments indicate that heavy fighting in MR 3 is imminent.
- The Khmer Communists are sending large numbers of reinforcements to the Phnom Penh area and the capital's collapse appears imminent.
- A discussion of the status of the Cambodian government's combat divisions is at Annex B.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

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16. On the South Vietnamese side, hasty retreats, disintegration of discipline, and continued Communist pressure led to the effective elimination of nearly all of ARVN's combat forces in the northern two military regions. In addition to the loss of almost all of the ARVN 23d Division and eight ranger groups in the MR 2 highlands in mid-March, the South Vietnamese have now lost the ARVN 22d Division and most of the 3d Airborne Brigade in coastal MR 2. In MR 1, four ranger groups – the 11th, 12th, 14th, and 15th – and four divisions – the 1st, 2d, 3d, and Marine – also have been almost entirely lost. Of the more than 50,000 South Vietnamese main combat forces in MR 1, only about 16,000 were evacuated from Da Nang before the Communists gained complete control of the city and the region on March 29.

17. Of the troops successfully extracted from Da Nang, some 8,000 are Marines, 4,000 are members of the ARVN 2d Division, and 2,000 belong to the ARVN 3d Division. One of the Marine brigades – the 468th – is still intact and has been sent to the Marine training center at Tu Duc to reequip and subsequently provide security for Saigon. Another brigade – the 258th – is being reconstituted from the other remaining elements and some recruits at Vung Tau in Phuoc Tuy Province, where the Marines have established their new headquarters. The 2d Division is being reorganized near Ham Tan, the capital of Binh Tuy Province in eastern MR 3. The MR 3 commander plans to deploy one regiment of the division to Phan Rang in Ninh Thuan Province – now the northernmost capital still under South Vietnamese control. The 1st and 3d Divisions will not be reconstituted; instead its survivors will be used as replacements for other ARVN units.

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18. The South Vietnamese are attempting to strengthen their tenuous hold on Phan Rang by dispatching the 2d Airborne Brigade from Saigon. Reportedly, it will be joined by several thousand survivors from the ARVN 2d and 22d Divisions as soon as they can be reorganized into effective units.

19. In other troop movements, the South Vietnamese have realigned their forces within MR 3. All but one regiment of the ARVN 25th Division have moved out of Tay Ninh City to the southern Tay Ninh -- northern Hau Nghia Province area. Moreover, major elements of the 3d Armored Brigade have shifted eastward to Long Khanh Province to meet the growing threat there. In late March, the 7th Regiment of the ARVN 5th Division rejoined the rest of the division in Binh Duong Province by shifting east from southern Tay Ninh. In addition, the 48th Regiment of the ARVN 18th Division returned from southern Tay Ninh to Long Khanh Province, placing the entire division in this province. To partially offset the departure of the 7th and 48th Regiments, the 32d Ranger Group, recently withdrawn from An Loc in Binh Long Province, was sent to southern Tay Ninh. Finally, the 12th Regiment of the ARVN 7th Division has been deployed from from MR 4 in response to new activity in Long An Province in western MR 3.

20. As a result of the heavy losses suffered by the South Vietnamese over the past two weeks, South Vietnam's main combat forces organized in active units now number only 107,000 men. Another 86,000 troops are in territorial force battalions, which raise South Vietnam's total regular combat forces to 193,000. Communist regular combat forces in the south have increased to 237,000 as a result of the infiltration of three strategic reserve divisions and air defense units. This is the largest number of regular combat troops in the south ever and marks the first time the Communists outnumber the government's combat forces.

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II. Combat Activity

South Vietnam

24. The South Vietnamese lost the remainder of the northern coast during the past two weeks, including the major population centers of Da Nang, Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, and Nha Trang. The military installation at Cam Ranh also fell during the period. The Communists now control the entire coast of South Vietnam north of Phan Rang and have captured a total of 17 provinces in the south since the beginning of the year. The South Vietnamese maintain tenuous holds on Phan Rang and Phan Thiet -- their last two provincial capitals in southern MR 2. In southern South Vietnam, attention shifted to the southern and eastern parts of MR 3, where Communist units launched heavy attacks against the capitals of Long An and Long Khanh Provinces.

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25. [REDACTED] COSVN has issued new instructions for future military activity. The instructions state that the Communists now anticipate total victory in 1975. Initially, the Communists are to concentrate on Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, and Binh Duong Provinces, leading to the collapse or defeat of the South Vietnamese government. [REDACTED] the Communists plan to launch a three-pronged attack against Saigon itself.

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Cambodia

26. The pressure on Phnom Penh's defenses is increasing, especially northwest of the city and on the east bank of the Mekong. Moreover, KC forces reportedly

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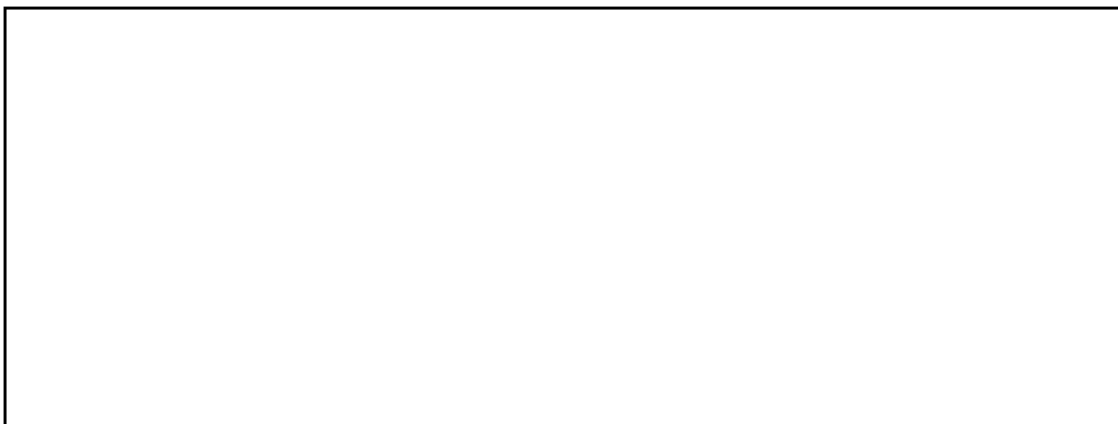
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have moved within 120-mm mortar and 75-mm recoilless rifle range of Pochentong Airfield. They also have stepped up shellings from rockets and 105-mm howitzers, causing increased damage to Khmer Air Force planes and facilities.

27. Southeast of Phnom Penh, government units on the west bank of the Bassac River have given up ground in the face of increased Communist pressure. Elements of FANK's 9th Division have taken over defense of Route 1. Despite this reinforcement, however, government troops are not expected to contain a concentrated KC attack on Phnom Penh from the south.

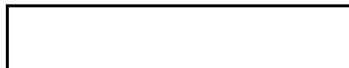
28. The Communists continue to make inroads south of the northern dike in the northwest sector. The deteriorating situation in this area has prompted the government to reorganize its command and control structure, but unless reinforcements can be obtained to build up understrength combat units, degradation of its defenses will continue. West of Prek Phnou, the Communists have penetrated government defense lines. FANK forces halted the advance but have not been able to close the gap. As a result, the KC now will be able to pressure government positions along Route 5.

29. Southwest of the capital the KC have forced the abandonment of several positions on Route 4. A new defense is being set up in the vicinity of Ang Snoul. The Communists have been increasing their pressure in this area and heavier attacks are expected soon. On the east bank opposite Phnom Penh, KC attacks forced the withdrawal of government units, apparently without orders. An extended stretch of the Mekong now is held by the KC, who are in an improved position to rocket the capital.



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Status of Stocks in Phnom Penh

35. Stocks of rice, petroleum, and ammunition continue to decline. The following tables show Cambodian government stocks of the critical supplies in Phnom Penh and comparative deliveries via the Mekong and airlift to the capital in 1974 and 1975.

**Critical Stocks in Phnom Penh
April 9, 1975¹**

	Stocks (Metric Tons)	Days of Supply	Daily Con- sumption Rate (Metric Tons)
Rice	6,400	10	645
Petroleum	4,400	14	327
Ammunition	5,200	12	433

1. Data are approximate.

Deliveries to Phnom Penh

	Metric Tons		
	Jan 1 - Apr 9, 1974¹	Jan 1 - Apr 9, 1975	
	Mekong	Mekong	Airlift
Total	181,100	18,050	52,800
Rice	84,300	6,750	21,900
Petroleum	48,700	5,300	9,500
Ammunition	48,100	6,000	21,400

1. Data concerning air deliveries for this period last year are not readily available, but it is estimated that deliveries by air accounted for no more than 10% of total imports for all of 1974.

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ANNEX B**STATUS OF FANK'S DIVISIONS**

Declining troop strengths, increasing desertions, low morale, poor leadership, and deteriorating equipment have brought the combat effectiveness of FANK's five divisions to a critically low level. These divisions and the approximately 20,000 other combat troops in the capital area are not capable of sustaining the defense of Phnom Penh much longer, and their collapse appears imminent.

FANK's manpower level is declining as combat losses and numerous desertions outpace the haphazard conscription program's ability to provide recruits. Manpower losses from January 1 to April 1 for all FANK forces totaled 22,300, including 6,600 deserters. Attempts to fill out combat units by transferring headquarters and support personnel to the front lines is proving unsuccessful, as have similar attempts in the past. Out of the 10,000 desk soldiers planned to be assigned to front-line combat units, only 3,200 to date have received specific orders. Because the desertion rate is high among such troops, however, many of the 3,200 will probably never report to their assigned units.

The problems of battle fatigue and the lack of pay combine to keep FANK morale low. FANK units that have been in near-constant combat since January 1, such as the 7th Division, have little will to fight anymore. Many FANK officers lack the dynamism and imagination needed to be effective in combat. Those who are capable are too often frustrated by senior officers. Divisiveness, indecision, and delays characterize the FANK General Staff and often result in poorly planned, uncoordinated operations.

Equipment losses are also degrading FANK's combat effectiveness. For example, of the five divisions' 70 armored personnel carriers (APCs) only 44 were operational as of mid-March. Moreover, the pace of combat is wearing out these vehicles faster than proper maintenance can be performed. They are not being replaced, because US military aid funds have been used almost exclusively for the purchase of ammunition. FANK has come to rely heavily on the APCs for quick reaction to KC attacks. Their declining availability is seriously degrading FANK's combat effectiveness.

Almost 25,000 troops are in the five divisions, but only 17,000 are combat personnel – troops in infantry and artillery battalions and armored personnel carrier squadrons. The level of combat personnel is more than 50% below the authorized

level. On the other hand, about 8,000 are headquarters and support personnel, only 15% below the authorized level. Moreover, there are some overstrength headquarters units, whereas not one combat unit is even at full strength. The following table provides the strength of FANK's five divisions:

Strengths of FANK Divisions

Division	H.Q. and Support Personnel	Combat Personnel	Total Strength
Total	7,900	16,700	24,600
1st	1,700	3,300	5,000
2d	1,700	3,500	5,200
3d	1,500	4,700	6,200
7th	1,000	1,700	2,700
9th	2,000	3,500	5,500

The 7th Division is not combat effective. It bore the brunt of the KC offensive northwest of the capital area in January and suffered extensive losses. One brigade has been deactivated and the two remaining are severely understrength.

FANK's 1st Division, which defends the southern approaches to Phnom Penh, is considered to be a marginally effective combat unit. Its foremost deficiency is that it is seriously understrength and suffers from having a large number of inexperienced recruits. As a result, the division is plagued by low morale, a high desertion rate, and an unwillingness by the troops to maintain defensive positions.

The 2d Division defends the area southeast of Phnom Penh where there has been little combat so far this year. It can be considered combat effective when compared with other divisions, even though two of its brigades have erratic combat records and are as capable of rapid retreat as they are of putting up stiff resistance.

FANK's 3d Division has fought well this year in defending the western approaches to Phnom Penh, but it has lost a substantial number of experienced company commanders, affecting operations adversely. These setbacks, as well as constant combat since February, have sapped the enthusiasm and aggressiveness of the 3d Division. Although still operating as an integral unit, its defensive lines are stretched thin.

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[REDACTED]

The 9th Division can be considered combat effective, although it has never been fully constituted nor fought as an integral unit. It has three brigades and a large division headquarters but lacks its own support elements, having no APCs or artillery. The division apparently has recently been assigned responsibility for Route 1 southeast of Phnom Penh, where earlier in the year one of its brigades was decisively defeated by attacking KC troops. In general, the brigades of the 9th Division have one of the poorest combat records of any to the FANK divisions.

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